



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WEST NILE VIRUS DETECTED IN SORRENTO VALLEY

First Sentinel Chicken Flock Tests Positive for WNV; County Vet Develops New Testing Method

County Environmental Health officials confirmed today that two sentinel chickens from the Sorrento Valley sentinel flock have tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV). Additionally, 16 wild birds have tested positive throughout the county since January of this year.

"Chicken flocks are often used as sentinels for West Nile virus and are a critical component for disease surveillance and detection," said Jack Miller, acting director of the County Department of Environmental Health. "We want to remind people that West Nile Virus is here to stay and people need to protect themselves when they are outdoors."

County Vector Control maintains four sentinel chicken flocks around the county as a surveillance tool to monitor for mosquito borne diseases. This early warning system worked by alerting Vector staff that the virus is active again in the Peñasquitos lagoon area. Sorrento Valley was a hot spot for WNV last year where not only chickens, but also humans, dead birds and mosquitoes contracted the virus.

In addition to chicken surveillance, the Office of the County Veterinarian, in collaboration with Vector Control, has developed a new and improved WNV testing method using the eyes of dead birds. This innovative method is faster and more effective than previous testing methods. It allows Vector Control staff to treat mosquito breeding sites immediately where the virus is active.

To protect yourself from mosquito bites, use DEET, avoid going outside at dawn and dusk, and keep door and window screens in good repair. For more tips on protecting your home, family and community, please visit the County's West Nile virus Web site at www.SDFightTheBite.com or call toll-free: (888) 551-INFO(4636).

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